



Health and Human Services **MEDIA RELEASE**

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March 29, 2017

Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County addresses County Health Ranking

2017 Report shows steady gains through community collaborations

SARASOTA COUNTY— The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) recognizes the value in measuring health outcomes using a variety of data tools. Today, Sarasota County Health and Human Services officials acknowledged the 2017 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps tool, released by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This study is the eighth in a series of annual reports highlighting the many community factors influencing health and measures progress using established data sources, many are available from the department at www.FLHealthCharts.com

“We are pleased with the consistent ranking and steady gains which are the result of long-standing partnerships and collaborations with local government, agencies and organizations,” says DOH-Sarasota Health Officer/Administrator Chuck Henry, who also serves as the Director for Sarasota County Health and Human Services. “Everyone benefits when we work together to maintain healthy environments and healthy lifestyles so the healthy choice is the easy choice.”

These rankings, which address physical environments; social and economic factors; health behaviors, and access to clinical care, are a snapshot of the health of counties across the nation. The report reinforces the benefit of community collaborations since health and well-being is not the result of one single effort but rather the dynamic achieved through the collective and ongoing efforts of many community partners. Through collaboration with local governments, non-profit organizations, health care facilities, business groups, schools, faith-based organizations and many other stakeholders, the department works to improve the health of all people in Sarasota County.

The 2016-2020 Sarasota County Community Health Improvement Plan has three priority health areas— healthy weight, behavioral health including substance abuse and access to care. Health officials say the County Health Rankings report shows steady progress in each of these areas – most notably fewer residents under age 65 are without health insurance. Proactive outreach efforts to enroll more residents into health insurance plans available through the federal Health Insurance Marketplace plays a role in the helping more residents access health care.

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“Sarasota County’s high ranking reinforces the good quality of life we enjoy as a community,” said Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer. “These rankings are just another example of why 97 percent of our residents reported the quality of life here in Sarasota County is good or excellent in our latest Citizen Opinion Survey. Many of our current board priorities and county initiatives and programs support maintaining the positive rankings captured in the report, and our local collaboration with the Department of Health will continue to help us leverage our community assets in this area.”

“In addition to being identified as one of the healthiest counties in the state of Florida, it gives me great satisfaction to report that once again, violent crime has dropped significantly in Sarasota County,” said Sheriff Tom Knight. “To put things into perspective, since 2009, violent crime has dropped nearly 40 percent. I credit several factors including community ties and intelligence-led policing which help our agency to prioritize and enhance quality of life for residents by preventing crime before it occurs. This decrease is something our residents should be very proud of.”

For more information about the 2017 County Health Rankings, visit www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Last week the Florida Department of Health celebrated a one year milestone as the first integrated department of health in the nation to achieve national accreditation through the [Public Health Accreditation Board](http://PublicHealthAccreditationBoard.org). Public health departments play a critical role in protecting and improving the health of people and communities. The seal of accreditation signifies that the Florida Department of Health has been rigorously examined and meets or exceeds national standards that promote continuous quality improvement for public health.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](http://PublicHealthAccreditationBoard.org), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](https://twitter.com/HealthyFla) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HealthyFla). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.

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Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities.

View the complete policy at www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx

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County Health Rankings: www.countyhealthrankings.org

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